

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SOFIA 02623 130849Z
ACTION CU-03

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AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
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AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: OEXC, SCUL, PFOR, BU
SUBJECT: PROPOSED 1977 AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL IN BULGARIA; FILM WEEKS IN

EASTERN EUROPE

USIA FOR IMV/C; STATE FOR EUR/EE AND CU/EE

REF: A) USIA 26315, B) SOFIA 2413, C) SOFIA 2332

1. WE ARE GREATLY SADDENED BY ATTITUDE TAKEN BY MPAA, AND HOPE SOMETHING STILL MIGHT BE RETRIVED. SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW THIS MIGHT BE DONE ARE GIVEN BELOW.

2. ALAS, IT IS CERTAINLY TRUE THAT AN AMERICAN FILM WEEK WILL NOT LEAD TO ANY UPSURGE IN COMMERCIAL FILM SALES HERE. BULGARIANS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUCH MATTERS WILL CONTINUE TO PURCHASE ONLY A HANDFUL OF AMERICAN FILMS EACH YEAR, AND ONLY THOSE WHICH EMPHASIZE THE SEAMIEST POSSIBLE SIDE OF AMERICAN LIFE. WHICH, OF COURSE, IS ALL THE MORE REASON FOR US TO TRY AND SHOW SOMETHING ELSE.

3. ASIDE FROM FACT THAT MPAA FEELS NO COMMERCIAL IMPETUS TO
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PAGE 02 SOFIA 02623 130849Z

MAKING FILMS AVAILABLE, WE GATHER FROM REFTTEL OTHER FACTORS SEEN

AS IMPEDIMENTS ARE (A) MPAA RELUCTANCE TO PROVIDE CURRENT FILMS; (B) FEAR THAT SCHEDULING FILM WEEKS WILL LEAD TO DEMANDS FOR RECIPROCITY WHICH USIA CANNOT ARRANGE; (C) DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATED WITH 35 MM FORMAT.

4. TAKING THESE POINTS IN ORDER, WE WOULD NOT THAT WE ARE NOT REQUESTING CURRENT FILMS. INDEED, IN REF B WE SAID "GIVEN RELATIVE SHORTAGE OF 1970'S FILMS WHICH ARE BOTH OF HIGH QUALITY AND YET DO NOT CONVEY OVERLY NEGATIVE VIEW OF AMERICAN CULTURE AND SOCIETY, WE SUGGEST WEIGHT OF FESTIVAL BE SHIFTED TO SOMEWHAT OLDER FILMS." MOST RECENT FILM WE MENTIONED REF B IS AMERICAN GRAFFITI, WHICH IS NOW ABOUT FOUR YEARS OLD, AND WE COULD MAKE GREAT IMPACT HERE WITH TOP QUALITY AMERICAN FILMS OF 1950'S AND 1960'S IF MPAA COULD BE LED TO COOPERATE.

5. IN BULGARIAN CONTEXT IT IS WE WHO WANT THE RECIPROCITY. BULGARIANS (SEE REF C) HAVE ALREADY ARRANGED WITH AFI FOR BULGARIAN FILM FESTIVAL IN US. QUESTION FOR US REALLY IS WHETHER WE CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT FACT THAT THE ONLY US FILMS SHOWN IN BULGARIA ARE WORKS LIKE "THEY SHOOT HORSES, DON'T THEY?," "MIDNIGHT COWBOY" AND THAT PERENNIAL FAVORITE OF COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS, "GRAPES OF WRATH."

6 FILM GAUGE IS LESS IMPORTANT. OBVIOUSLY WE WOULD PREFER 35 MM PRINTS, BUT IF ACCEPTING 16 MM MAKES THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAVING A FILM WEEK OR NOT, WE WILL TAKE 16 MM PRINTS AND SHOW IN A SMALLER CINEMA. THE FILMS MUST BE GOOD THOUGH (SEE REF B, PARA 5), AND THE PRINTS CLEAN AND UNSCRATCHED. (THE OLDER SET OF 16 MM "CLASSICS" OFFERED FOR SO MANY YEARS BY USIA WOULD NOT BE SUITABLE.) CONDITIONS HERE BEING WHAT THEY ARE, THE ONLY WAY TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL FILM WEEK IS TO HAVE IT IN A REGULAR CINEMA. THE AUDIENCES WE WANT ARE INHIBITED (AND IN SOME CASES PROHIBITED) FROM ENTERING THE EMBASSY.

7. WE RECOGNIZE THAT ARRANGEMENTS WILL NOT BE EASILY MADE, BUT HOPE THAT AGENCY WILL MAKE A STRONG EFFORT WITH MPAA, AND WITH OTHER FILM SOURCES SUCH AS AFI AND MUSEUM OF MODERN ART NY. WE UNDERSTAND AN AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL IS BEING PLANNED FOR MOSCOW; WE WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO HAVE THE FILMS AFTER MOSCOW HAS SHOWN THEM. THE BULGARIANS HAVE AGREED TO ALLOW AN AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 SOFIA 02623 130849Z

VAL, IN RETURN FOR THE ONE THEY WILL MOUNT NEXT YEAR. IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO LET THIS ENORMOUS OPPORTUNITY GO BY THE BOARDS. FELDMAN

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